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Fifty-fourth session
Agenda items 8 and 10

QUESTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL PERSONS SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 8 April 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I am addressing you with reference to the statement made by the representatives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the session of the Commission of 2 April 1998.

We reject as unfounded and malicious the allegations on the existence of hidden prisons, detention camps and detainees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is sheer fabrication launched by individual representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina from time to time, subject to their propaganda requirements.

The said attempted provocation is yet another deplorable instance of abuse of a major humanitarian issue for political purposes.

Last February, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) representatives made a tour of prisons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They had unlimited access without prior notification to all the establishments they wanted to visit. Their priority was the Sremska Mitrovica prison, since the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina had launched false allegations whereby hidden men from Srebrenica had been imprisoned there. In their letter to the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the ICRC representatives apprised our competent bodies that they could not confirm the above allegations, indicating also that they were given free access without notification to the alleged venues where the prisoners were kept.

Representatives of foreign and Yugoslav media have also visited the Sremska Mitrovica prison and saw for themselves that the allegations on hidden detainees were untrue, as clearly declared at the press conference upon the visit.

Once again, we would like to underscore that the issue of missing persons in the territory of the former Yugoslavia should be tackled with extreme seriousness and that any propaganda drives in this connection could be counter-productive.

I would request you, Mr. Chairman, to have this letter distributed to all the members of the Commission and to have it published as an official document of the fifty-fourth session, under agenda items 8 and 10.

(signed) Mr. Miroslav Milošević
Chargé d'affaires a.i.